

Switched Plane Made Fatal Trip, C.A.B. Informed

The Airline Transport Carriers, Inc., DC-3 which crashed near Coalinga Jan. 28, killing 32 persons, was not the ship the company had intended using on that particular flight, witnesses testified at yesterday's hearing before a Civil Aeronautics Board panel in the Santa Monica Post-office.

All aboard were killed, including 28 Mexican nationals, a U.S. immigration guard, the pilot, co-pilot and stewardess.

Checkup Overdue

Both Charles C. Sherman, president of the line, and Harry Conover, chief pilot, said Capt. Francis Charles Atkinson and First Officer Marion Harlow Ewing had flown the wrong ship from Burbank.

They were supposed, Sherman said, to use the plane due at Burbank from Las Vegas. Instead they took off in another ship of the same type which was waiting to be given its regular 100-hour checkup then seven hours overdue.

Conover said he did not believe Capt. Atkinson knew he took the wrong plane.

There was no explanation advanced for the crew taking the wrong plane, but after the hearing officials and inspectors said the unusual mistake "might not be as difficult as it would appear."

Deputy Sheriff Witness

Russel A. Potter presided at the hearing, and other members of the C.A.B. panel were James N. Peyton, Earle R. Mitchell and Will Sievert.

Mitchell, a C.A.B. investigator, said that an investigation of the wreckage developed that the left engine showed external evidence of fire.

Peyton, who is safety bureau chief for C.A.B. Region 6, said the crash may have been caused by a ruptured fuel pump gasket. Stains on the pump case, he added, indicated leakage may have been going on for some time.